

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mount Airy is in the initial stages of a program to provide low-rent public housing for families who are unable to purchase or rent standard housing. The Town has created a Housing Authority which is composed of five local citizens. The Authority sets policies for management and operation of the Authority property, it selects sites upon which units are to be constructed, it hires architects to design the buildings and it awards contracts for the construction of low-rent units. When the units are available for occupancy, the Authority will adopt policies governing admission, continued occupancy and eviction.

The Housing Authority is not a rental agency which competes with local realtors. Every precaution has been taken to prevent such an eventuality. In the first place, incomes are checked very closely. An applicant will not even be eligible for consideration if his income shows that he could pay the going rates for standard housing. The rough rule of thumb is that twenty percent of a family's budget can be expended for shelter. To spend more will probably deprive the family of other basic necessities such as food and clothing. This "twenty percent" rule becomes difficult to apply when the income is lower or higher than the average. Since public housing is designed for low-income families, policies have been formulated to compensate for this difficulty. Where extenuating circumstances are present, a family can be admitted for a less than twenty percent rental. For example, a widow with three young children might have an income of \$125.00 per month from the Dependent Children's Fund. Twenty percent of this income would be \$25.00. It would be extremely callous to assume that four persons could be fed, clothed, and provided with the barest necessities of life each month on the remaining \$100.00. This widow would be allowed additional exemptions for her dependents and her rent could be lowered to \$15.00 or \$18.00 per month. This family could not be housed in standard housing on the private market for that amount of money. The children are given an opportunity to develop normally rather than being stigmatized as the product of a slum. They will make better citizens for the Town. To carry the example further, assume that this widow remarries. Her new husband has a monthly salary of \$400.00. Under the twenty percent formula, the rental (or payment toward a home) would be \$80.00. That family has moved into an economic category where private enterprise can accommodate it. The family will be asked by the Housing Authority to move out of the low-rent unit because they are no longer eligible tenants. An annual review of the incomes of each wage earning tenant is made to ascertain their continued eligibility to live in the Housing Authority dwellings. The employers of these tenants are requested to verify the income as reported by the tenants.

Public Housing has no grudge against the person with standard housing to rent or sell. The local Authority will cooperate by